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SLOAN, Jennifer <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9439-720X>

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Saying the Unsayable: Foregrounding Men in the Prison System

Dr Jennifer Sloan

Senior Lecturer in Criminology, Sheffield Hallam University

In this chapter, I argue that, whilst men comprise 95% of the prison population in England and Wales (MoJ, 2017), and dominate the prison and criminal justice systems across the world, they do not dominate the academic and policy discourse surrounding punishment and penal reform. Instead, certain groups such as women, young people, ethnic minorities, religious groups, or the mentally ill tend to be given specific attention. Rarely are men in prison as a group foregrounded within critical discourse around penal policy and research; rather, they are 'seen' (whilst simultaneously going 'unseen') as the norm, the stereotype, and the population that prison was designed for in the first place.

This chapter questions why it is that men tend to be hidden from view in discussions of prisons and penal policy and research, and the implications of this for both men and for women within (and beyond) the prison system. In particular, it discusses how, ultimately, there are serious implications for feminist thinking in the process of not considering the men at the heart of the prison system. In this chapter, I draw on my research with prisoners undertaken as part of my ethnographic doctoral research in 2009, funded by the University of Sheffield (see Sloan, 2011). All names used are pseudonyms. Where there is a jurisdictional focus provided, England and Wales is the setting, however, arguably this is a global issue as I argue that men

dominate the prison systems of the world, but rarely are truly seen in the discourses surrounding them.

As a feminist, I believe in equality, kindness and treating others with respect and dignity, regardless of corporeal composition, clothing or colour. Yet feminism has often been (incorrectly) seen as silencing the voices of men in favour of the oppressed female. As a result, the feminist movement has at times been (inaccurately) positioned as 'anti-men' and as prioritising the needs of women. This process is particularly clear within feminist criminology and in feminist work around incarceration. In December 2013, an article published in the Lancet (Hawton et al, 2013) resulted in the BBC headline 'Self-harm 'four times more likely' in female prisoners (BBC, 2013). The article itself reveals that, between 2004 and 2009 '5-6% of male prisoners and 20-24% or female inmates self-harmed every year' (Hawton et al, 2013: 1). Considered merely on these proportions, the statistics suggest a much larger problem in women's prisons. Yet, what the reporting by the BBC masks is the huge scale of the problem of self-harm amongst male prisoners. Indeed, there were 5,340 male inmates who self harmed in 2009, compared to the 1,356 female inmates, which prompts the question: why is one group of prisoners privileged in relation to attention, sympathy and outrage about the problem of self-harm in prisons when both groups are suffering (Hawton et al.: 3)?

Men dominate the prison system globally. In England and Wales there are ten times as many male as female prison institutions. Yet, strangely, this centrality of men in the prison system is almost always pushed aside, with other distinct groups deflecting attention from the male whole. Women's imprisonment, ethnic minorities, sex offenders, young offenders, juveniles, the mentally ill and religious groups tend to dominate academic and policy discourse, whilst all apparently overlooking the numerical

dominance of men within prisons. Women are often positioned as different and worthy of special attention due to the fact that they are the minority. For example, Baroness Corston, in her seminal review of women with particular vulnerabilities within the criminal justice system states:

> 'There are fundamental differences between male and female offenders and those at risk of offending that indicate a different and distinct approach is needed for women. For example: Most women do not commit crime…' (2007: 3).

By contrast, it is rare for men to be given distinct attention as a gender group in prison research and policy-making. There is no equivalent to the Corston Report for men, even though many of the needs and vulnerabilities raised by Baroness Corston in relation to female prisoners are true for men in prison too. For example, following the point that 'most women do not commit crime'[1] (Corston, 2007: 3) the report states a range of 'differences' between male and female offenders including the following:

> 'Women with histories of violence and abuse are over represented in the criminal justice system and can be described as victims as well as offenders'
>
> 'Coercion by men can form a route into criminal activity for some women'
>
> 'Drug addiction plays a huge part in all offending and is disproportionately the case with women'
>
> 'Self-harm in prison is a huge problem and more prevalent in the women's estate'
>
> (Corston, 2007: 3)

All of these statements raise issues that apply to both women *and* men in prison. Male prisoners also often have experienced histories of violence and coercion, drug and

[1] Most men in society also do not offend.

alcohol addition, self-harm, and mental illness (Prison Reform Trust, 2017). However, such perceived vulnerabilities could be said to be in direct conflict with our expectations of what men should be and how they should act (see Sloan, 2016). One man that I spoke to in prison, when discussing his self-harming behaviours, made a key observation relating to gendered behavioural expectations of men in prison:

I said [to a member of staff] because to me it's like coping at times. Ok it's not normal to you…I said but you, I said you'd consider me going along and hitting someone else normal behaviour, whereas cutting, hurting myself, that's not normal […] (Noah)

In addition, the Corston report states that 'Prison is disproportionably harsher for women because prisons and the practices within them have for the most part been designed for men' and 'Levels of security in prison were put in place to stop men escaping' (2007: 3). What this fails to acknowledge is that prisons and practices were designed to accommodate male prisoners, but, more often than not, with outdated ideals of standards and prisoner needs in contemporary times; i.e. not for male prisoners *today*. Many prison designs are hundreds of years old. Further, as Young and Reviere note, 'most prisons are built to house violent men' (2006: 2), and the fact that the prison estate was created and designed to prevent men escaping merely highlights the security-focussed nature of imprisonment. This can be felt equally harshly by both women and men – perhaps more so for men at times, bearing in mind the lack of trust that is placed in their gender as a whole (a good example of this can be seen in Jimmy Boyle's account in Smith, 1984: 474).

Yet, many may feel it 'unfeminist', (with regard to the fight to bring forward women's voices), to want to foreground the voices of men when women still suffer

inequality throughout the world; this is the origin of the chapter's focus on the importance of including men's voices and experiences as unsayable - particularly by a feminist criminologist. In this chapter, I question the lack of attention that has been given to men as a gendered group in prison, considering the ways in which the subject has been avoided in academic discourse in the past, and the reasoning behind this lack of explicit consideration of male prisoners. In addition, I consider the implications for this avoidance, both for men and women in prison and beyond. I argue that, ultimately, it is 'unfeminist' to silence the vulnerable, regardless of their gender or sex, if the feminist struggle is in the name of equality (bell Hooks, 2000). Indeed, Cohen (2014) recognises that constructing one group as 'normal' relative to another with regard to gender in the criminal justice system can reinforce the hegemonic masculinity that feminists and feminism struggle so hard to push against.

The 'Feminist' Agenda

There is a variety of definitions that are assigned to (or imposed upon) 'feminism'. In this chapter, I draw on the definition of feminism taken from leading feminist bell hooks. She argues that:

> 'Feminist struggle takes place anytime anywhere any female or male resists sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. Feminist movement happens when groups of people come together with an organized strategy to take action to eliminate patriarchy.' (2000: xi).

Yet, as a 'feminist' researcher, it always shocks me how little attention men are actually given – both as victims and perpetrators of crimes - and how much attention is diverted

from them. Indeed, the very idea of being a feminist researcher who is arguing for the acknowledgement of the needs of men sits uneasily with many staunch feminist academics. Where feminism does engage with prisons, it tends to be for the benefit of the oppressed women - of a variety of intersecting identities – within. For example, Flavin and Huss (2014) draw attention to the reproductive and health rights of women in prison:

> 'Many mainstream feminist and prochoice groups have been reluctant to adopt intersectional approaches to declare common cause with other progressive movements, Yet the advent of mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex (PIC) makes clear that securing women's reproductive health and rights requires our full-on and intersectional engagement'.

I am not wishing to suggest that all feminists divert attention from men – far from it - nor do I suggest that women in prison are undeserving of such attention. What is lacking, however, is any great consideration of the ways in which men's gendered experiences of prison may need just as much sympathetic attention as women's if they are to become less violent or harmful upon release from prison. Such an avoidance of the male subject and his associated potential vulnerabilities is not just limited to the male offender; indeed Cohen makes a similar point in relation to male rape victims, stating that '…the male victim of rape is constructed at present in reluctant and stilted conversation with feminism' (2014: 5-6).

Greer (2012) advocates that women should problematize behaviours, norms and bodies being policed by those in authority (usually powerful men). Such processes, however, also apply to men in prison whose masculinities are often restricted and pushed to extremes of negativity through the imposition of hegemonic norms and

unattainable ideals of maleness, AND social control processes imposed and enforced by a majority-male criminal justice and politico-legal system. As such, men in prisons are subject to the policing of gendered behaviours by other, more powerful men (see Bibbings, 2014; Kimmel, 1994; Connell, 2005). The issue of patriarchy can (and does) affect and impinge upon both women and men.

In addition, the hypermasculine expectations of male prisons tend to focus upon traits of resilience, being able to cope (or at least hide the fact that you can't), not to show weakness or emotions, and to get through your sentence (see Sloan, 2011). None of these traits involves men standing up and calling attention to their oppressed situation – indeed, where they do, they tend to be faced with problems and seen to be causing trouble. As one participant in my research said:

And you keep complaining they [prison staff] see you as a pest.[...] You know what I mean, you try to stand up, […] you try to stand up for yourself…they see you as a problem. So you can't win in prison [...] You cannot win. You try standing up for yourself and you start putting in complaints and start, you moan about the food and that…they just see you as a control hazard and everything, you know what I mean (Gabriel)

Whereas many women outside of prison will stand up for the rights of women prisoners, men do not readily champion or defend masculinity in the same ways.[2] In fact, to be seen to need such championing would place male prisoners as being in need of help or assistance, thereby undermining what autonomy and power they have managed to retain within the prison (see Sloan, 2016), which is so important to the masculine self:

[2] One potential reason for this is the fact that 'prison masculinity' is often seen as 'bad masculinity' rather than being associated with positive connotations.

as Kimmel notes, 'the hegemonic definition of manhood is a man *in* power, a man *with* power, and a man *of* power' (1994: 125). Self-sufficiency is key to this, particularly to men in prison (Sloan, 2011, 2012a).

'Prison damages people' (Behan, 2002), but many appear surprised when men are released from prison to commit more crimes, or at the least we seem to be a society resigned to the doomed state of prisoners (by which I mean male prisoners) and the prison system's failings with regard to rehabilitation. But there does always seem to be a sense of 'I told you so' in media reports of reoffending of male prisoners. When inside, there is little focus on what happens to the men, as long as they are kept away from 'us'. Indeed, when it comes to prisons (by which we can generally read 'men's prisons'), security is key, as seen in the first objective of the UK's Her Majesty' (HM) Prison Service, which is:

> 'To protect the public and provide what commissioners want to purchase by:
>
> - *Holding prisoners securely*
> - Reducing the risk of prisoners re-offending
> - Providing safe and well-ordered establishments in which we treat prisoners humanely, decently and lawfully.' (Ministry of Justice, 2015 - emphasis added).

Research on Men in Prison

Most feminist criminological scholars acknowledge the lack of attention given to men within criminological research, in spite of their dominance within the field of offending (Wykes and Welsh, 2009; Walklate, 2004; Howe, 2008). There has been some, albeit not

much, attention given to men and criminal justice,[3] and a number of prison scholars have included notions of masculinity in their work (see Aresti; 2010; Butler, 2007; Crewe, 2009; Jewkes, 2002, 2002b, 2005; Moolman, 2011; Phillips, 2012). Yet, in all of these, maleness is often secondary to another factor which distinguishes or differentiates certain types of men - violence; drugs; the media; sex offending; race, etc.). However, as illustrated by a quote from a participant in my own research, men in prison do tend to go through this process of differentiation amongst themselves, situating themselves as 'different' to other prisoners (see also Sloan, 2016):

[…] me I'm not, I'm, I'm in prison but I'm not a criminal criminal like […] People out robbing, thieving and, I've never ever gone out robbing…to get money or nothing like that, the only crime I've committed is violence, which is pub fights (Harvey)

Such approaches of differentiation fail to consider the similarities between prisoners (and people outside prisons) - a tendency that pervades much criminological research more broadly. Human beings tend to look for the things that mark offenders out as 'different' - be that from the 'general public', or from other offenders.

Where masculinity does receive direct consideration, this tends to be framed in negative terms, such as in relation to violence, control, hyper-masculinity (which is seen as being 'over' masculine), being sexually problematic, etc. This is not to say that these issues are not important, but yet again they mark out certain individuals as worthy of special attention, rather than considering the male prison population as a whole. Not all men in prison perform their masculinities negatively - many just want to 'do their time'

[3] Interestingly, Greer made the observation that 'Probably the only place where a man can feel really secure is in a maximum security prison, except for the imminent threat of release' (2012: 270).

and get on with their lives. Because such men do not perform their masculinities in highly visible or obvious (i.e. negative) ways, they, in essence, become invisible.

There are many reasons why we fail to *see* men in prison in research, policy, or real life, such as the female focus of the feminist research agenda[4]; the resilience and avoidance of vulnerabilities that male prisoners try to show; and controlling notions of patriarchy and masculinity more broadly. In addition, however, we can look to three key reasons stemming from the prison experience itself: men's loss of individuality and identity within prisons; the 'normality' of the male prison; and the cost and size of the problem.

The Loss of Individuality in Prisons

It has been widely acknowledged that prison can be a dehumanising experience, and many processes are invoked within prisons that erode an individual prisoner's sense of individuality. As one participant in my research said:

Well it's coz like they're taking all your identity away and em…they take all your identity away from you, you're just a number in prison […] Yeah. You're just a number in prison really (Elliott)

Arguably many prisons attempt to remove the (sexual) individuality of prisoners through the use of uniforms or generic clothing (Ash, 2009), hair cutting processes (Goffman, 1961) and restrictions on their ability to enact expressions of symbolic

[4] In particular, it is difficult for many feminists to be seen to be advocating for the rights of those men who have caused so much pain to women, and undertaken many of the activities that so many feminists strive to fight against.

aspects of gender identity such as fatherhood, employment, 'consumer masculinity' (Crewe, 2009: 277) and so on. In essence, the very markers of manhood that are expected in wider society are removed at the gate, leaving only the corporeal available for use - whether that be on the body (such as through tattooing or cleanliness - see Sloan, 2012a, 2012b) or by the body (as with violence and sexual harm).

Whilst prisons are seen as extremely masculine spaces (Toch, 1998), they are rarely portrayed as positive masculine spaces, or spaces of multiple masculinities. In fact, the prison is generally seen as the sphere of hypermasculinity expressed in negative terms. What tends to be lost is the multiplicity of masculinities that represent men's lived experiences of their sex (Connell, 2005), as many men arguably have to conform to the hypermasculine expectations imposed by their audiences in order to fit into the setting (see Schmid and Jones, 1991; Sloan, 2011; Kimmel, 1994).

As such, processes of imprisonment can actually erode gender identity for prisoners. The specific identity of individuals tends to be replaced with the all-encompassing marker of 'prisoner': that is 'prisoner', not 'male prisoner'. By doing so, the female prisoner's sex is presented in a similarly distorted way to those outside - people in prison are 'men'. Women prisoners are 'non-women' who have offended against their female traits.

It is such applications of a non-sexed identity that causes so much consternation about women prisoners, whose experience can be argued to be incompatible with female corporeality (see Finateri, 1999; Wahidin, 2005). Hannah-Moffat discusses the issues associated with the idea of women-centred prisons, noting that the very definition of such a thing is difficult:

> 'because it relies on a problematic category of "woman"; it is insensitive to wider social, economic, and political cultural relations of power; it sets up a false dichotomy between the woman- and male- centred regimes; and it denies the material and legal realities of imprisonment' (1995: 135).

To change the prison in response to one sex is too simplistic - there are similarities in experiences shared by men and women, yet only the *female* prisoner tends to receive specific attention because of their sex in policy and practice. The nuances of both maleness and femaleness are lost within the sphere of power and control - yet this is rarely acknowledged. There is an assumption that prisons are inherently masculine spaces, reflecting popular discourses around masculinity and femininity which arguably do not do justice to the subtleties of either (see Hayes, 2014), and normalise the association between negativity and male prisons. Rarely do we see how men in power actually control and restrict the actions of men in lesser power (Bibbings, 2014), albeit this has been significantly theorised in discussions of hegemonic masculinity - for some men to be in power, there must always be others who are subordinate. This occurs within the prison, and outside in controlling the actions of certain groups of men (Connell, 2005).

The 'Normality' of the Male Prison

The Criminal Justice System is dominated by men: men are the majority of criminals, prisoners, prison officers, judges and police. The terms 'prisoner', 'offender', 'criminal' all tend to be associated by default - consciously or unconsciously - with men rather than women (see also Wykes and Welsh, 2009). Heidensohn states: '…females are not only much less criminal than males, they are so much less criminal that whereas

convictions are, statistically at least, 'normal' for males, they are very unusual for females' (1985: 2). This is a slightly problematic statement, in that, in mid-2015 there were 32.1 million males in the UK (ONS, 2015). Albeit this is inclusive of Scotland and Northern Ireland, we can still see that the numbers of men in prison (as one branch of the offending population) is an extremely small proportion of the total number of men in the UK.

Popular cultural portrayals of prisons have tended to be dominated by depictions of men, although women prisoners have become more visible in popular culture through *Prisoner Cell Block H*, *Bad Girls*, and *Orange is the New Black*. Even so, there are substantially more films set in men's prisons than in women's (and most of these distort public perceptions through their focus upon high security prisons in the USA - see Wilson and O'Sullivan, 2004).

Despite this, and the fact that most of the infamous criminals in the world are male, thereby ensuring a prominent representation of the male form in popular cultural representations of prisons, still men in prisons are not 'seen'. Instead, the focus is on the surroundings – the violence (again, a male dominated enterprise, but rarely seen as such), the harm, the fame, the crimes. These all are fore-grounded, rather than being subject to any real commentary regarding the maleness of the state of affairs, or the fact that there is such surprise and dismay when women are seen in the same situation. Men in prison are, in essence, invisible in the foreground[5] - be that in research, the media, or in popular culture.

[5] Many thanks to Dr Gwen Robinson for this point.

The Size (and Cost) of the Problem

The majority of money and spaces that are devoted to prisons are directed towards men[6]. Whereas women's prisons are merely categorised as open or closed, (or sometimes, semi-open), by contrast the behaviours and risks perceived to be posed by men in prisons in England and Wales demand a four-tiered categorisation system of A-D status. Category A - high security prisons - are designed to make escape the hardest and house the most 'high risk' prisoners[7]. Category B is the next grade of security down, following which is Category C, which also often includes 'training prisons' where prisoners can learn trades and skills to aid in rehabilitation and reintegration upon release from prison. Category D prisons are open: men can walk in and out of the prison and security is much more dependent upon compliance with the rules of the prison.

According to the Ministry of Justice, the prisons which had the highest cost per prisoner in 2014-15 were those holding male young people (ages 15-17) at £87,280 per prisoner, and male dispersal prisons (holding the more dangerous prisoners in a way that allows them to be dispersed within the prison estate[8]) at £59,470 per place. The highest overall resource expenditure costs within the system were for male local prisons, housing short term (not high security) prisoners and those on remand or awaiting sentence, (£1,001,014,792) and male category C jails (£945,555,027). In

[6] In prisons in England and Wales, men and women are housed separately - in only two prisons are they even in the same prison complex (HMP Durham and HMP Peterborough); this has also been true until recently in Scotland.

[7] These can also hold prisoners who are classified as category B. Both prisons and prisoners are categorised – usually these would be matched where possible, but a prisoner will have to be situated in a category of prison equivalent or higher than their own categorisation.

[8] All dispersal prisons will be high security (Cat A) prisons, but not all high security prisons will be dispersals (many thanks to Nickolas Addis for clarifying this!).

comparison, the *overall resource expenditure* of closed (£21,704,972), local (£126,396,164) and open prisons (£7,813,839) *combined* is considerably lower for the women's estate than for the men's (Ministry of Justice, 2015c: Table 1).

By giving attention to women and young people, it is clearly visible that something is being 'done' to address the needs of the most vulnerable within the prison system. But does this actually just reflect stereotypical views of vulnerability and victimhood? Those prisoners that do receive focus are often those upon whom the spending of more money from the public purse can be justified according to political imperatives and penal populism (Pratt, 2006) - they are the 'ideal victims' of the system (Christie, 1986). Of course women and young people need to be given direct attention according to their specific needs within the prison system - there is no argument with that.

What is clear, however, is that male prisoners are rarely constructed as 'vulnerable' (see Sloan, 2011), and certainly not in the same way that society sees women and young people in the prison system. This is in spite of the fact that men in prison are actually an extremely vulnerable group, often linked to pre-prison vulnerabilities (such as having a background in the care system). Such 'vulnerability' is in itself problematic, arguably shifting men out of their masculine positionings - men in prison strive not to be seen as vulnerable in order to avoid personal victimisation and perceptions of weakness (McCorkle, 1992; Sabo, Kupers and London, 2001; Sloan, 2011).

Why Does It Matter? Why Should Feminists Care?

Men in prison may not receive much direct attention as a gender, but do they really need to? As noted already, they are the 'norm' when it comes to prisons and offending, they receive the resources and 'attention' by default of being the majority, and giving them more direct attention may just divert from those more vulnerable minorities who need distinct attention that they currently do not receive enough. Indeed, men often play a role in women's offending, either through harm or recruitment, and they are also responsible for much female victimisation. However, I would argue that there are numerous reasons why this lack of attention actually matters in reality:

1. *Disproportionate Attention Given to Men in Prison*

A key reason why this lack of attention matters comes down to proportionality. More attention is given to the minorities in prison than to the mainstream. Yet this diverts attention from looking at why it is that men are in the majority. The only thing that connects 95% of the prison population, other than criminality, is maleness. By giving disproportionate attention to non-males or minorities of men in prison, we fail to ask the question of what it is about men more broadly that results in their predominance in the system (Wykes and Welsh, 2009).

A key reason for many feminists abhorring this group is, of course, due to the fact that many of these male offenders have caused severe harm to women (and other men), and are the epitome of many of the problems feminists are fighting against - male oppression and dominance, violence, sexism, and misogyny. But this is surely the most important reason to advocate engaging with men - if we can understand the offenders,

then we are one step closer to solving the problem of patriarchy. We must understand the intricacies of the problem in order to address it.

2. *Perceptions of Women in Prison*

There are issues with the fact that men are seen as the 'norm' in prison when one considers public perceptions of women prisoners – it can add to the demonization and 'othering' of female offenders. Women's lack of dominance in the prison system singles them out as the exception, which becomes the focus of the attention, whilst at the same time normalising men's place within the penal sphere. Through the normalisation of maleness of incarceration, too much force is given to the notion that women in prison are 'abnormal', which in turn reemphasises discourses on what women 'should' be and how they 'should' behave in order to be seen as true women (see, for instance, Crewe (2006) regarding female prison officers; see also Heidensohn, 1985). Ultimately, engaging with men allows more solutions to be sought to address their harmful behaviours and actions.

3. *Recidivism*

One of the justifications that many use for undertaking prisons research is the need to understand offenders and the criminal justice system better, leading, perhaps, to reduced recidivism. Reducing reoffending is a core aim of many penal systems - as illustrated earlier in this chapter by the UK Ministry of Justice's position statement. It is also arguably a gendered process, (see Giordano, Cernkovich and Rudolph, 2002), in

that men and women have different access to resources to support desistance. Rumgay posits that 'successful desistance from crime may be rooted in recognition of an opportunity to claim an alternative, desired and socially approved personal identity' (2004: 405). For men, a 'socially approved' self will often depend both on their own perceptions of their masculinity, and the opinions of others, particularly other men who ultimately grant them their masculine status (Kimmel, 1994). By not focusing upon this one aspect of identity that is so prominent within men's lives, we are missing a huge area of subjectivity and identity through which to address criminality. This is particularly relevant when one considers Messerschmidt's recognition that crime is a resource for doing gender when other resources are unavailable (Messerschmidt, 1993: 84), and that 'prison can be a site for changing one's masculine practices' (2001: 71).

This has been attempted on occasions. Potts discusses a prison group run by the Probation Service in West Yorkshire which focused on masculinity in the 1990s (Potts, 1996), noting that:

> After all, if we believe that alcohol or drugs related crime can be reduced by work intended to reduce such abuse, then surely gender related crime – and that's most of it – can be reduced by developing interventions which deconstruct traditional masculinity (1996: 31).

Yet currently, no official offending behaviour programmes focus exclusively on masculinities, although those that look at domestic violence and sexual offenders do give some consideration to male behaviours (which, in turn, makes certain gendered assumptions about these offences). These programmes highlight the key offences against women, but do not actively challenge the structural or less visible forms of domination or control that are in action in everyday life. There is little official recognition of the more general gendered state of reducing reoffending and the

importance that masculinities can play in this process. That said, there is a newly emerging focus on masculinities from the perspective of charitable organisations, one example of which is 'Safe Ground'. This organisation runs a number of masculinity-focussed courses, one of which is called 'Man Up' which is:

> 'A new group-work programme designed to support men and young men to explore the ways in which the concept of masculinity contributes to shaping individual identity. Using active learning techniques, Man Up aims to challenge some of the attitudes and negative outcomes experienced by men as a result of wanting or needing to fulfil stereotypes and expectations' (Safe Ground, 2015).

At present, the course is being run in six prisons/young offender institutions, and highlights a growing change in approaches to considering masculinity (see further Blagden and Perrin, 2015; Safe Ground, 2014).

4. Men Have 'Complex Needs' Too

One of the key reasons that for giving specific attention to minority groups such as women in prison is their 'complex needs'. Yet, whilst there are certain needs of minority groups that are distinct to that group, some of these needs may be shared by male offenders, as well as having their own male-centric needs. The Bromley Briefings report that 24% of male prisoners had spent time in local authority care compared to 31% of female prisoners; 27% of men had experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse compared to 53% of women; 15% of men had symptoms indicative of psychosis compared to 25% of women; and 21% had attempted suicide at some point compared to 46% of women (Prison Reform Trust, 2016: 32). Although women had higher percentages, it has to be recognised that women only make up 5% or the prison

population, so the actual *numbers* of men experiencing such problems is substantially higher.

What seems to be forgotten in the arguments about 'complex needs' is that addressing the complex needs of women does not mean that we cannot address the complex needs of men, and the two need not be mutually exclusive.

Concluding Discussion

It is often argued that women are not suited to the current prison system in England and Wales. Evidence shows that women are more able to retain family links and undergo rehabilitation and integration when housed in small units close to where they come from (Corston, 2007). However, high rates of recidivism, issues of prison violence and poor mental health show that men also, are not suited to the current prison system in England and Wales. Prisons and prison regimes seem to be designed to make inhabitants feel uncomfortable and punished - not just through incapacitation and the lack of physical liberty, but also through restricting personal interactions with those outside the prison; subjecting those inside to humiliation and uncertainties which threaten mental well-being; and forcing individuals to live together in confined spaces with those that they would not ordinarily choose to associate with (see also Sykes' pains of imprisonment, 1958). These conditions apply to both men and women within the prison system, but the feminist voice has tended to prioritise the needs of women in prison more than those of men.

In one sense this is understandable - feminism emerged to fight for female equality and women's rights, and prison does impose inequalities upon women who fall

foul of power inequalities within society that often stem from patriarchal and misogynistic institutions and structures. However, male prisoners too suffer from an infringement of their rights and men in prison are often exemplars of vulnerabilities and the cumulative impact of inequalities over their lifetimes. The forces of patriarchy and hegemony do not solely disenfranchise women: groups of less powerful men - the subordinate and marginalised masculinities (Connell, 2005) - are also subjected to structures and practices that put them at a huge disadvantage relative to other men and women. Just because these subordinate/marginalised men are members of a gender group which has framed patriarchy, does not mean that (a) these men necessarily benefit from broader patriarchal behaviours - whatever Brownmiller, (1975) might argue; or (b) that they are not worthy of a voice or attention. Just because some men make up the most patriarchal and misogynistic dimensions of power structures does not mean that other men do not have issues that need addressing with regard to being disempowered and vulnerable.

This chapter has attempted to highlight the importance of giving feminist attention to men in prison. The side-lining of male prisoners to the realm of the 'taken for granted' or the 'norm' in prison gives disproportionate attention to others and potentially misdirects resources that could actually be used potentially to reduce men's dangerousness (not least towards women). Such disproportionality also leads to a skewed perception of women in prison as being different to other women, and in some ways not 'true' women at all due to their transgression from gendered behavioural expectations. Finally, to ignore the problems that men in prison suffer misunderstands the very nature of imprisonment and those who are subjected to it, and misses the picture of the imposition of unequal power relations and hegemonic power structures

upon both men and women. Both men and women are victims of the actions of men (both within and outside of prisons themselves), be that through direct victimisation, or through state, political and institutional practices (see also Connell, 2005).

This may not be a popular proposition for feminist thinkers who see women as the 'ideal victims' (Christie, 1986). However, unless we embrace the problem of men in prison, why they dominate the prison system, and what vulnerabilities, behaviours and backgrounds bring them there, (and unless we do this with a degree of sympathy and understanding), then it is unlikely that the situation of men always being seen as offenders will change, and, in turn, unlikely that women will ever stop dominating the realm of the 'victim' (see also Cohen, 2014). This is not to say that women don't matter - far from it: we need to continue working towards advancing the voices and rights of women (both in and out of prisons), which are still pathetically unequal when actually looked at in detail. But one way that we can do this is through looking at the other side of the coin - we need to look at the men.

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